

Contour Farming

Tennessee Conservation Practice Job Sheet

330

For:	Farm No.:
Field(s):	Tract No.:
Designed By:	Approved By:
	Signature:
Date:	Date:

Definition

Tillage, planting, and other farming operations performed on or near the contour of the field slope.

Purposes (check all that apply)

- To reduce sheet and rill erosion.
- To reduce transport of sediment and other water-borne contaminants.

Condition Where Practice Applies

This practice applies on sloping land where crops are grown. Contour farming is most effective on slopes between 2 and 10 percent.



Rotation and Type of Tillage

Crop	Type of Tillage and/or Percent or Type Ground Cover/Roughness

Baseline(s): A baseline is the contour line(s) laid out in the field to establish tillage and planted row patterns. Assistance to establish the baseline(s) will be provided by the NRCS/SCD local field office. Once established, the baselines should be maintained. A narrow strip of grass (1-5 feet wide) or markers will help to maintain the baseline(s).

Maximum In-Row Grade(s)

Field(s)	Maximum In-Row Grade for Contour

Operation and Maintenance

1. Perform all tillage and planting operations parallel to contour baselines or *terraces*, *diversions*, or *contour buffer strip* boundaries where these practices are used, provided the applicable row grade criteria are met.
2. Where *terraces*, *diversions*, or *contour buffer strips* are not present, maintain contour markers on grades that, when followed during establishment of each crop, will maintain crop rows at designed grades. Contour markers may be field boundaries, a crop row left untilled near or on an original contour baseline, or other readily identifiable, continuous, lasting marker. All tillage and planting operations shall be parallel to the established marker. If a marker is lost, re-establish a contour baseline within the applicable criteria set forth by this standard prior to seedbed preparation for the next crop. It may be useful to capture the baseline coordinates with a GPS so they can easily be re-established if lost.
3. Farming operations should begin on the contour baselines and proceed both up and down the slope in a parallel pattern until patterns meet. Where field operations begin to converge between two non-parallel contour baselines, establish a correction area that is either permanently in sod or established to an annual close-grown crop.
4. Where contour row curvature becomes too sharp to keep machinery aligned with rows during field operations, establish sod turn strips on sharp ridge points or other odd areas as needed. Avoid mowing, spraying, or machinery usages on sod areas to prevent tracking and rutting.
5. Renovate *field borders* as needed to maintain at least 65 percent ground cover. Maintain adequate field border width to allow farm implements room to turn.

Questions concerning these specifications and/or crop substitutions should be directed to the NRCS/Soil Conservation District office at _____.

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